

State Commission

The Virginia Service Commission oversees 23 AmeriCorps State Programs and four Volunteer Generation Fund programs. The Commission's reach spans the Commonwealth through programs, placement sites, and partnerships involving Volunteer Centers, colleges and universities, community action programs, and other community and human service organizations. In January 2015, Virginia became the first state to be recognized as an Employer of National Service. The 2015 Volunteerism and Service Conference attracted more than 500 participants and provided training on topics from volunteer management to service project implementation. Through a highly effective partnership including nonprofit organizations, Virginia Department of Veterans Services, Virginia Veterans Corps, and AmeriCorps State, VISTA, and NCCC, functional homelessness among veterans in Virginia has been eliminated. The Commission maximizes service in Virginia through training, supporting effective partnerships, and expanding opportunities for everyone to find a service niche.

AmeriCorps State

Aspire!'s Learning Links AmeriCorps program in south Arlington engages 13 AmeriCorps members who serve children during school, after school, and at home. AmeriCorps members serve at Barcroft, Campbell, Carlin Springs, Claremont Immersion, and Randolph Elementary Schools. Members are an integral part of the Learning ROCKS! Program, actively planning weekly schedules, implementing lesson plans, leading literature circles and homework groups, and more. The members tutor individual students, give small group instruction, and are classroom aides. They plan youth and family activities at several local apartment buildings and have a weekly activity for the children of residents that fosters healthy habits in literacy, nutrition, and physical activity. Corps members can live at one of the buildings, which lets them become an integral part of the community and provide seamless services for children. More than 92 percent of students in the program have improved their reading levels.

The Dan River Year AmeriCorps program engages 27 AmeriCorps members who advance Virginia's goal to improve STEM outcomes for its citizens. The program serves K-12 students, job seekers, and workers in Halifax, Pittsylvania, Henry, and Patrick Counties, and the cities of Martinsville and Danville. The program focuses on improving math and computer literacy for disadvantaged students and adults. It expands STEM enrichment opportunities, including out-of-school camps, a regional science fair, and mobile lab experiences. The AmeriCorps members serve one-on-one with students and adult learners to improve their STEM skills. They also work in teams, with community volunteers, to explore opportunities for STEM careers. The members have recruited 493 volunteers who support STEM enrichment, career development, and skill programs. The program has quadrupled the number of winter STEM camps and the number of students, and has started a new Science Café for adult learners.

AmeriCorps National

Youth Volunteer Corps engages three AmeriCorps members in serving Hampton Roads and Staunton. Last year in Hampton Roads, AmeriCorps members engaged 321 youth, including 159 disadvantaged youth, in 8,184 hours of service. The youth volunteers participated in 112 service projects for 27 community agencies, including The VA Medical Center, SPCA, and Bluebird Group Farm. The program launched in Staunton in November 2015 with similar goals to engage youth in service.

Mt. Adams Institute VetsWork AmeriCorps members serve with public lands management and natural resource agencies to meet land improvement needs that would otherwise be unmet. AmeriCorps members maintain trails, clear non-native invasive species, maintain recreation areas, engage volunteers, do technical writing, and evaluate and document archeological sites. In George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, four VetsWork AmeriCorps members gave 4,025 hours of service, maintained 87 miles of trail, coordinated volunteers, and maintained two facilities.

AmeriCorps VISTA

Helping Overcome Poverty's Existence, Inc. (HOPE) in Wytheville is an AmeriCorps VISTA sponsor that is helping reduce local food insecurities in Wythe and Bland counties by raising community awareness, assessing and aligning community efforts, and supporting program expansion. The AmeriCorps VISTA's fundraising efforts have helped raise more than \$135,000 to sustain and expand the weekly backpack program which ensures that low-income children have food to eat during weekends and holidays. As a result of the increased funding, HOPE has hired a program coordinator, leased a warehouse, and drastically increased the number of students served. The program now serves 500-800 students per week in all of the elementary schools in Wythe and Bland counties, as well as two Head Start centers. To support this increased service, the VISTA is also recruiting, tracking, and managing more than 65 community volunteers.

National Service Impact in Virginia



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, an AmeriCorps VISTA intermediary, supports nonprofit organizations and university-based community outreach efforts to better address the needs of those in poverty in the New River Valley. AmeriCorps VISTAs are building robust volunteer networks to support school readiness, post-secondary success, successful aging in place, and access to healthy foods. One VISTA member serving at the Kindergarten to College program is raising the number of low income high school students who enroll in college by increasing their exposure to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics through pre-college programming, mentoring, and large scale events. To support these activities, the VISTA is recruiting, training and organizing volunteers; conducting targeted outreach; and building community partnerships. As a result, the pre-college programming has drawn the participation of eight area Title I schools, more than 540 students, 100 volunteers, and a dozen university partners. Additionally the 2015 Virginia Science Festival was attended by over 6,000 children and families and included 200 exhibitors, 200 student volunteers, and 25 sponsors.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness in Hampton received two AmeriCorps NCCC teams this year to assist homeless veterans and other populations. The organization's mission is to prevent and end homelessness in Virginia through community collaboration, capacity building, education, and advocacy. AmeriCorps NCCC members prepared and served 596 meals, and received, inventoried, and distributed 14,293 pounds of food donations and more than 5,000 pounds of household goods. The team made "Welcome Home" baskets, which included household goods for veterans moving into housing after having experienced homelessness. Members documented and created a database of veterans in need of assistance, and made more than 350 phone calls to individuals who had used winter housing to see if they still needed help. The teams renovated multiple transitional housing centers, and landscaped at both the H.E.L.P. Day Center, which provides training and assistance to those experiencing homelessness, and the Natasha House, a transitional home for women and their families. At the Menchville House, an emergency shelter for families, members repaired software and internet connection issues at the house computer lab.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team partnered with The Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission to conduct community outreach and data collection, neighborhood improvement projects, and water quality and stewardship activities. The Commission exists to bring Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren counties, and the City of Winchester, to pursue common goals, work together on regional issues, and find efficiencies through collaboration. To begin their service, the team served in the Town of Stanley where they dredged and redirected a small canal system. Next, members served with Literacy Volunteers Winchester Area to create, distribute, and analyze a written survey on the perception and awareness of adult literacy in the City of Winchester. Following this, members were stationed at Clermont Farm where they removed trash and brush distributed water quality information with the Downstream Project. In the Town of Berryville, members tended community gardens, removed vegetation, and restored a creek bed. Lastly, the team conducted building surveys in Luray and input the data to support the city's planning efforts.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Department of Social Services of the City of Hampton sponsors the Foster Grandparent program serving Newport News, Hampton, and Williamsburg and James City and York counties. More than 110 Foster Grandparents provide academic, social, and emotional support to more than 550 special needs students living in these areas. Over the past year, 116 Pre-K students demonstrated gains in social or emotional development due in part to the dedication and support of the Foster Grandparent volunteers. The weekly interaction with the volunteers has enhanced the children's readiness and success for kindergarten. Foster Grandparents also served weekly in the Newport News and Hampton City Public School Districts to implement individualized literacy skills development plans for third grade students. Results demonstrated that approximately 60% showed improved literacy skills.

Senior Corps RSVP

The Norfolk Senior Center, the sponsor of Prime Plus RSVP of Portsmouth, provides structured programming at two senior centers run by the Department of Recreation, Parks & Open Space. Seventy-one RSVP volunteers serve the community through the Prime Plus RSVP of Portsmouth, engaged in activities that include serving food and counseling homeless individuals; conducting daily wellness check-ins on 300 residents to ensure senior safety; and recruiting community volunteers to assist with the Sheriff's Safety Town initiative. A new initiative called the "Golden Chefs Program" was created this year. One night a week, RSVP volunteers and other community members donate one item from a grocery list and help to prepare a meal for an entire group at a specified location. The designated head chef of the evening (often times a local culinary student) will lead the "Golden Chefs" in preparing the meal. This initiative serves many purposes, including increased social support at the weekly meal in addition to providing seniors with tips on healthy food choices and preparation.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Senior Companion Program sponsored by Clinch Valley Community Action Inc., is the only organized senior volunteer program in the service area that provides trained and reliable companions to residents. The Senior Companion volunteers have provided respite services to caregivers and community based in-home services to clients in rural southwest Virginia for more than 28 years. The service area lacks night, weekend, and rural area public transportation systems, making transportation a major barrier for those citizens who do not drive or have their own vehicle. This past year, 33 Senior Companions provided 38,000 hours of service to 80 frail and elderly clients. Of the clients who responded to a survey to measure the impact of the program, most clients reported that they were able to continue living independently at home thanks to the services provided by the Senior Companion volunteers.

Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities across America. The SIF programs throughout the state primarily focus on strengthening the workforce and improving educational attainment for youth. The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$210,631 in expanding the impact of four nonprofits and in Virginia.

Volunteer Generation Fund

Virginia's Volunteer Generation Fund program aims to develop and support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. Grants totaling \$250,000 were awarded to four nonprofit volunteer connector agencies. These programs implemented effective practices to expand volunteering, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve problems. Community volunteers recruit, train, and deploy volunteers as a specific strategy to address early childhood literacy, mentor high school seniors to become college ready, provide increased socialization and independent living activities for individuals with disabilities, develop and implement a school volunteer program in five county schools, and improve educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools.